

# 2009 King County Community Survey Final Report

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Conducted for



September 2009

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# Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Full Summary Report .....	1
Section 1: Overview and Methodology.....	1
Section 2: Analytical Methods .....	4
Section 3: Perceptions of the Community.....	5
Section 4: Local Services .....	7
Section 5: Regional Services.....	9
Section 6: Feeling of Safety .....	12
Section 7: Law and Justice Services .....	13
Section 8: Customer Service and Community Engagement.....	15
Section 9: Transportation Related Services .....	17
Section 10: Usage of County Services .....	18
Section 11: Guiding Values for the County .....	19
Section 12: Regional Priorities.....	20
Section 13: Summary .....	21

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# 2009 King County Community Survey

## Executive Summary

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### Purpose and Methodology

To assess satisfaction with both local and regional services, King County conducted its first customer satisfaction survey during June and July 2009. The results from the survey will be used as part of the County's on-going strategic planning process.

The survey was administered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin to a random sample of 1,024 households. There were at least 250 respondents from each of four planning areas. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least +/-3.0% at the 95% level of confidence.

### Major Findings

Overall, the quality of life and quality of county services rated slightly above the national average for large communities with more than 250,000 residents. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of King County compared to other large communities are listed below:

- **Comparative Strengths:**
  - Perceptions of the County as a place to raise children and work
  - How safe residents feel in their neighborhood
  - Enforcement of local traffic laws
  - The County website
- **Comparative Weaknesses:**
  - How well the County is planning for growth
  - Police/sheriff services
  - Building permits/inspections
  - How easy it is to contact employees

**The top priorities for improvement to local services were:** (1) construction/maintenance of roads and bridge, (2) police/sheriff protection, and (3) economic development/business services.

**The top priorities for improvement to regional services were:** (1) affordable housing and homeless housing programs, (2) growth management, (3) public health protection, (4) human services for at-risk youth, (5) tax assessment, billing collection and distribution, (6) disaster preparedness, (7) Metro Transit, and (8) public health clinics.

**Baseline for Future Performance.** While the results of the 2009 survey will have many applications, one of the most important applications should be to provide a baseline for assessing the County's performance in future years.

# ***Full Summary Report***

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# 2009 King County Community Survey

## Summary Report

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### 1. Overview and Methodology

**1.1 Overview.** King County government provides many different services to the community's 1.9 million residents. For people who live in one of the County's 39 cities, the County provides numerous regional services such as Metro transit, public health, Medic One, wastewater treatment, and disaster preparedness. For the approximately 350,000 residents who live in King County's urban and rural unincorporated areas, the County provides both regional services and local services such as road maintenance, Sheriff protection, and land-use planning. To assess satisfaction with both local and regional services, King County conducted its first customer satisfaction survey during June and July 2009. The results from the survey will be used as part of the County's strategic planning process.

**1.2 Methodology.** The survey was administered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. The sample was stratified to obtain statistically valid results from each of four geographic areas in the County: (1) the City of Seattle, (2) all other incorporated areas in the County excluding Seattle (38 suburban cities), (3) urban unincorporated areas of the County, and (4) rural unincorporated areas of the County. A random sample of 750 households in each of these four areas was selected to receive the survey. Of the 3,000 households that were selected to receive the survey, 277 completed the survey by mail and 747 completed the survey by phone for a total of 1,024 completed surveys or a 34% response rate. There were at least 250 respondents from each of the four areas. Figure 1.1 below shows the distribution of respondents by the location of their home. The overall results of the survey were weighted to reflect the actual population of each of the four geographic areas of the County. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least  $\pm 3.0\%$  at the 95% level of confidence. The results for each of the four areas have a precision of at least  $\pm 6.5\%$  at the 95% level of confidence.

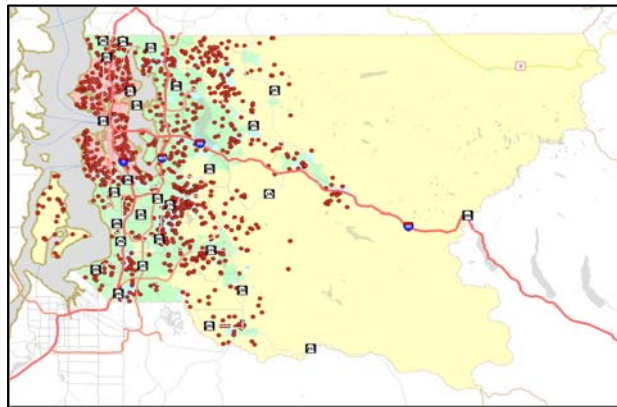


Figure 1.1 (Location of Respondents)

## 2009 King County Community Survey

The overall results of the survey were generally representative of the County's population with regard to race and Hispanic ancestry when compared to the recent Census estimates based on the 2007 American Community Survey as shown in Figures 1.2 and 1.3 below.

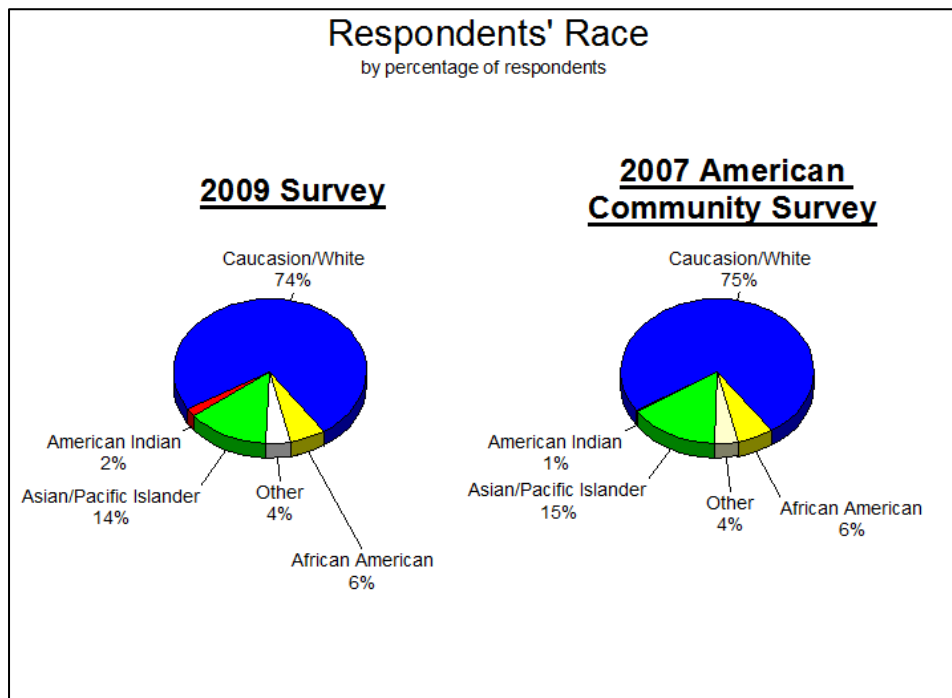


Figure 1.2 (Respondent's Race)

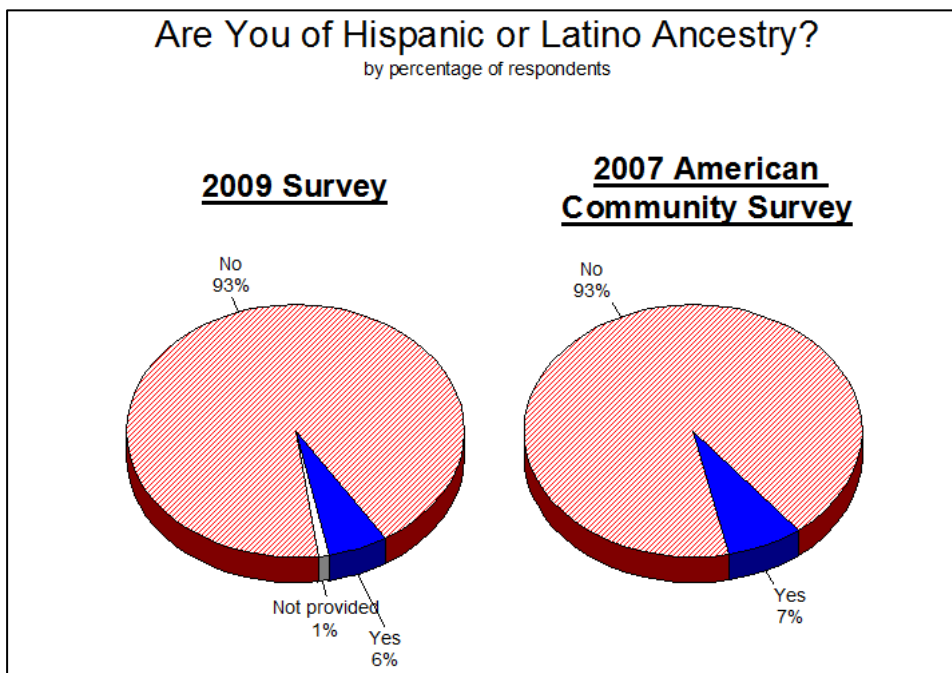
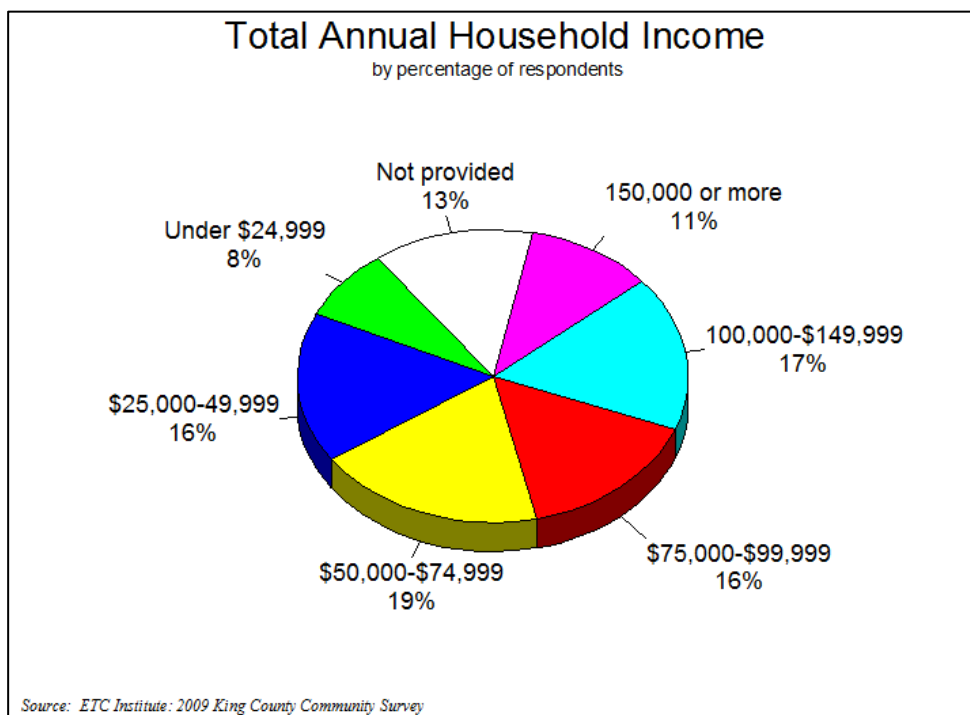


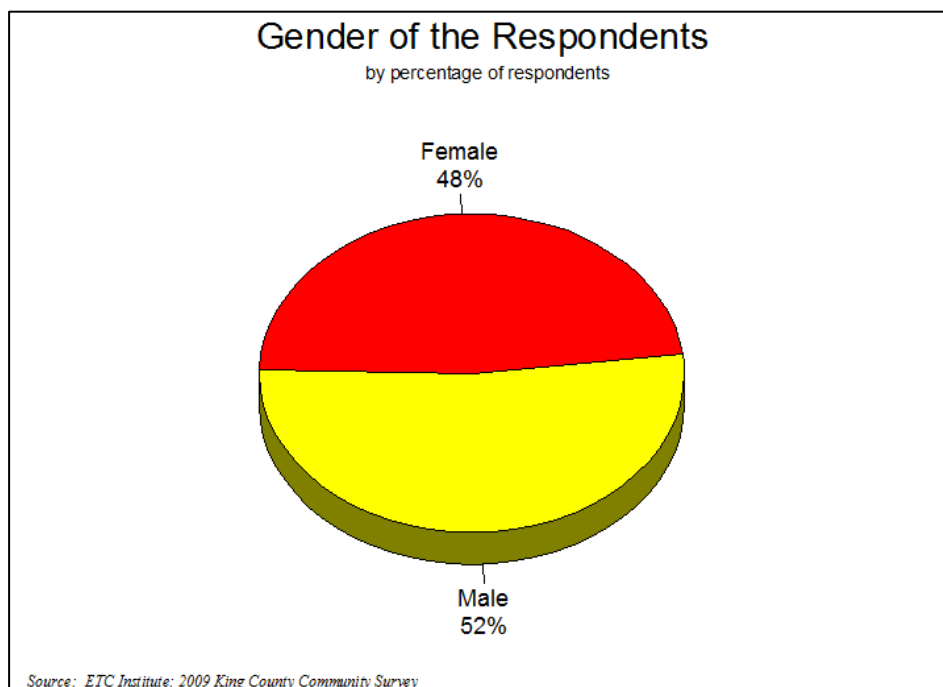
Figure 1.3 (Hispanic Ancestry)

## 2009 King County Community Survey

The overall results of the survey were also representative of the County's population with regard to gender and all income groups as shown in Figures 1.4 and 1.5 below.



**Figure 1.4 (Household Income)**



**Figure 1.5 (Gender)**



## 2. Analytical Methods

To help King County with the interpretation of the results, ETC Institute conducted several types of analysis.

- **Importance-Satisfaction Analysis** (quadrant analysis) was performed to help county leaders objectively assess which services would have the greatest increase on overall satisfaction with the County if additional resources were available. The analysis incorporated two types of data from the survey: (1) the level of importance that residents thought should be placed on services and (2) the level of satisfaction with these services. This survey instrument is not designed or intended to ascertain specifically why residents were unsatisfied, only to identify areas for further inquiry and/or those that should receive attention. Importance-Satisfaction analysis is based on the concept that the County will maximize overall satisfaction among residents by emphasizing improvements in those service categories where the level of satisfaction is relatively low and the perceived importance of the service is relative high.
- **Benchmarking Analysis.** Benchmarking analysis was completed to determine how satisfaction levels with local governmental services in King County compare to other large U.S. communities. The benchmarking analysis compared the results for King County to the results of a national survey that was administered by ETC Institute during March 2009 to a random sample of more than 2,000 residents in the continental United States living in communities with a population of 250,000 or more.
- **GIS Mapping.** ETC Institute prepared maps to show how people in different areas of King County responded to the survey. Each of the four areas that were included in the survey was shaded to show how residents from each area responded to specific questions. Shades of blue were used to identify positive (or satisfied) ratings. Shades of off-white were used to identify neutral (or okay) ratings, and shades of red/orange were used to identify negative (or dissatisfied) ratings. More than 80% of the maps that were prepared were the same color in all four areas, which shows that King County residents generally feel the same about most issues regardless of the location of their home.

**Interpretation of “Don’t Know” Responses.** The percentage of persons who gave “don’t know” responses is important because it often reflects the level of utilization of County services. For graphing purposes, the percentage of “don’t know” responses has been excluded to facilitate valid comparisons between county services and with other communities.

Major findings from the survey are described on the following pages.



### 3. PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

**3.1 Overall Ratings of the County.** Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a wide range of issues that impact perceptions of the community. The results of the survey show that residents were generally satisfied with the overall quality of life in King County and that most residents thought King County was a good place to live, work and raise children. Residents were least satisfied with the County's efforts to plan for growth.

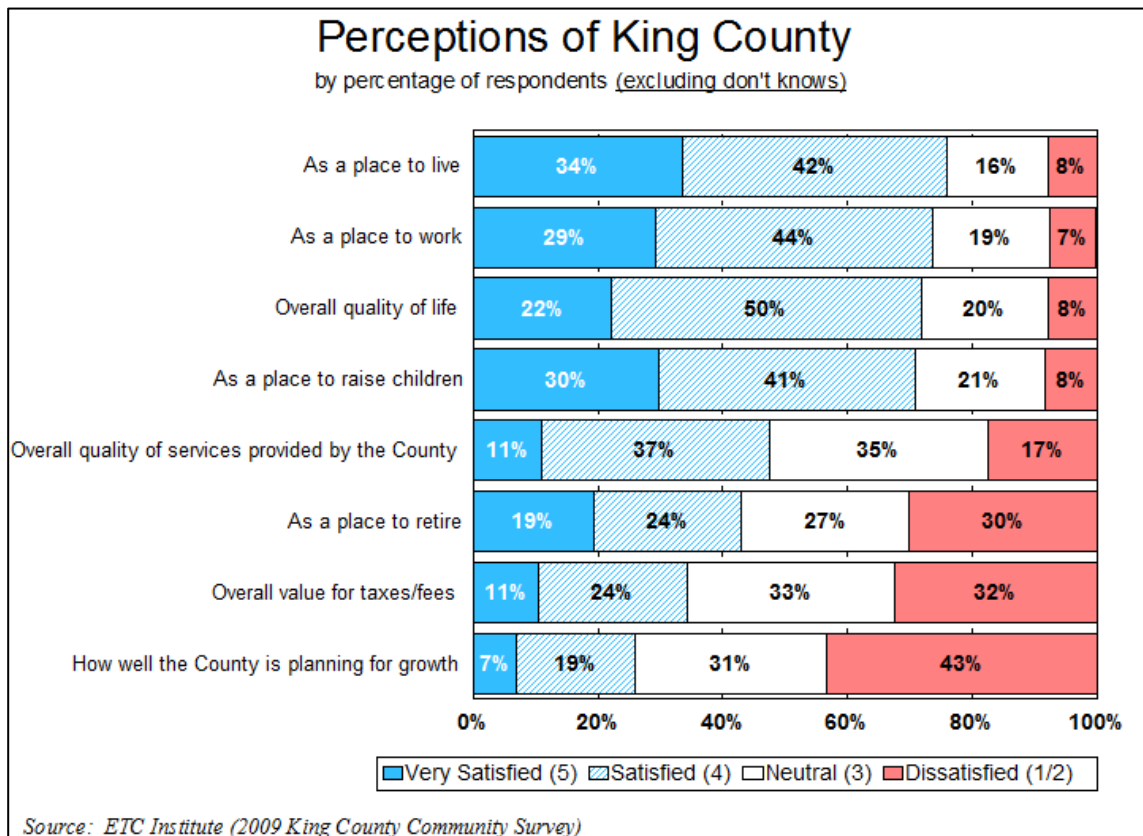


Figure 3.1 (Perceptions of King County)

**3.2 How Perceptions of King County Compare to Other Large Communities.** The chart on the following page shows how satisfaction levels in King County compare to the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents. Overall satisfaction with the quality of county services and the quality of life in King County rated 3% above than the national average. Areas that were identified as comparative strengths and weaknesses of King County because the results for King County were at least 5% above or below the national average are listed below:

### Comparative STRENGTHS

- Perceptions of the County as a place to raise children
- Perceptions of the County as a place to work

### Comparative WEAKNESSES

- Perceptions of the County as a place to retire
- Perceptions of how well the County is planning growth

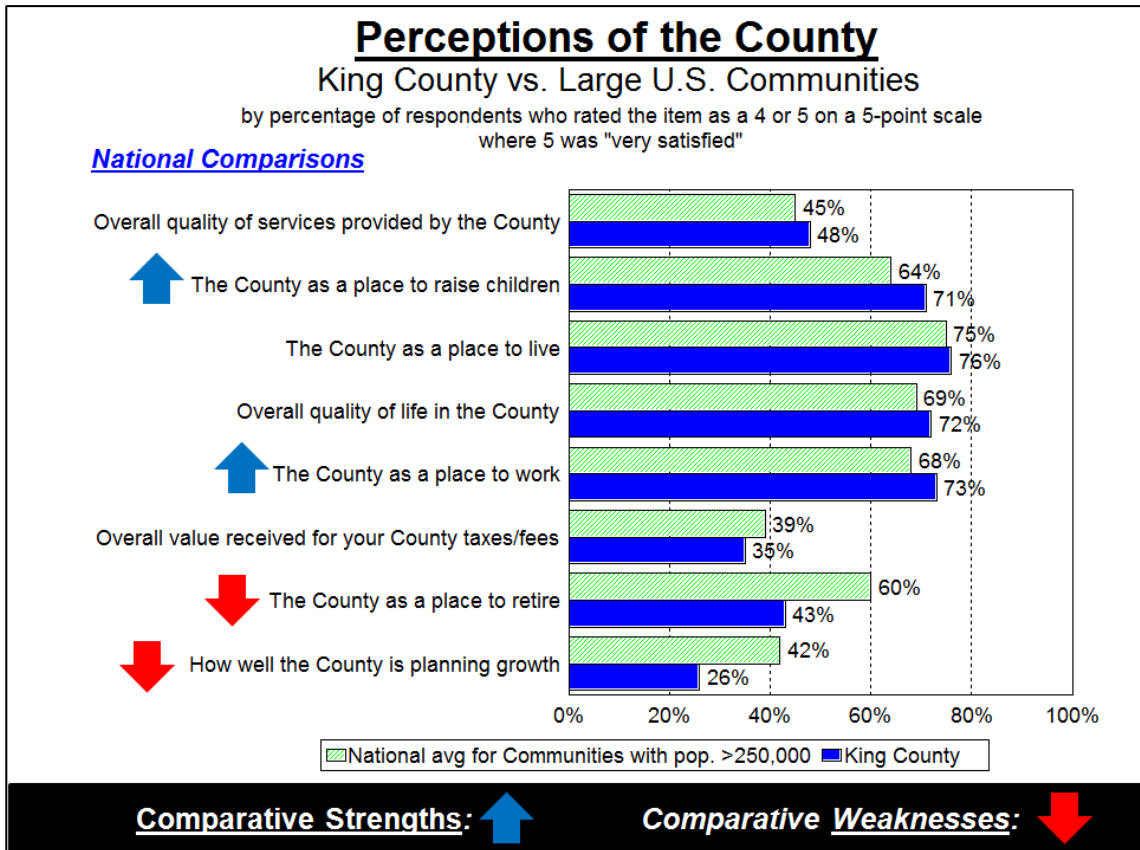


Figure 3.2 (Benchmarking Data for Perceptions of the County)

**3.3 Differences by Location.** The results of the GIS mapping analysis showed that there were no significant differences by location for five of the eight perception issues that were assessed on the survey.

- **Residents in Seattle** gave slightly higher ratings for the overall quality of county services than other areas of the County. The higher ratings in Seattle may be due to a higher concentration of County services, such as public transit, and greater visibility of the County government since the County's government center is located in Seattle.

- **Residents in rural areas** generally gave lower ratings for how well the County is planning growth and the overall value for county taxes. According to ETC Institute's national DirectionFinder Survey®, residents in rural areas are generally less satisfied with the value of taxes/fees and the efforts by local governments to plan growth, so these differences were not surprising.

## 4. LOCAL SERVICES

**4.1 Satisfaction with LOCAL County Services.** Residents living in unincorporated areas of King County were asked to rate the quality of six mandatory and three discretionary services that are provided by King County. The highest and lowest rated local services based on the percentage of respondents who gave positive ratings (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means "very satisfied") and negative ratings (ratings of 1 or 2) are listed below:

### HIGHEST Rated Local Services (highest % of positive ratings)

- Utility services
- Police/Sheriff protection
- Local parks

### LOWEST Rated Local Services (highest % of negative ratings)

- Building permit and inspections
- Community planning

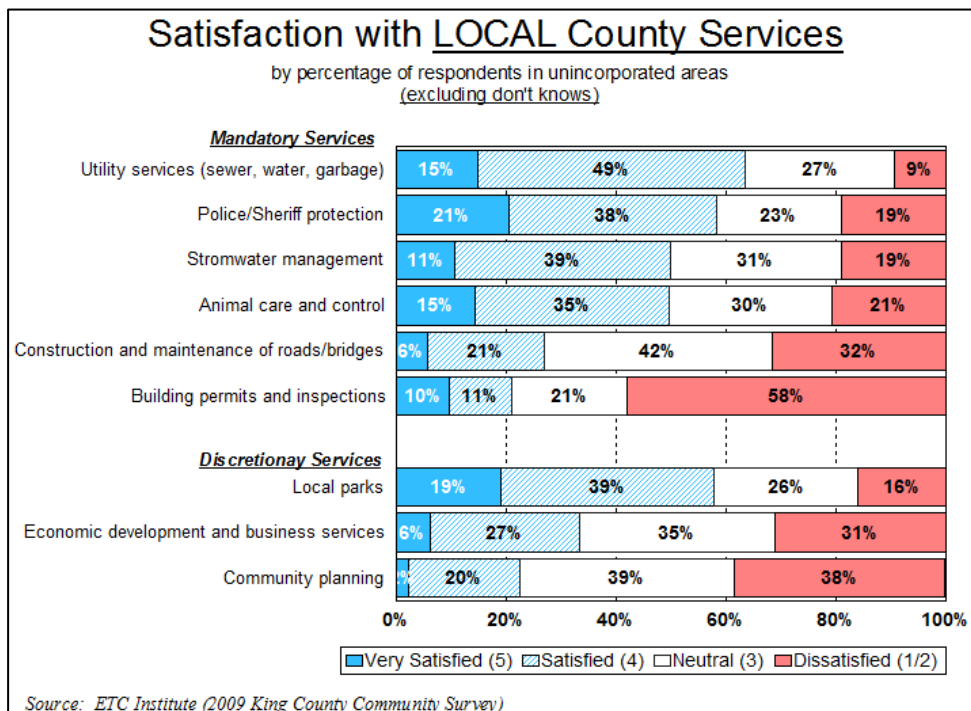


Figure 4.1 (Satisfaction with Local Services)

**4.2 How Satisfaction with LOCAL Services Compares to Other Large Communities.** The figure below shows how satisfaction with local governmental services in King County compares to the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents for six of the nine local services that were assessed on the survey.

Satisfaction levels with stormwater management, utility services, local parks, and animal control were about the same in King County as other large communities.

Ratings for police/sheriff protection and building permits/inspections were significantly lower.

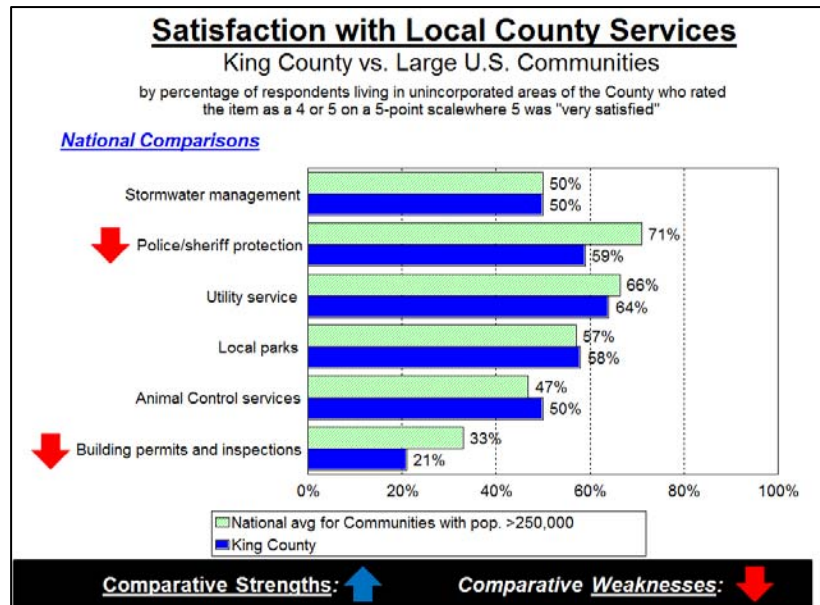


Figure 4.2 (Benchmarking Data for Local Services)

**LOCAL Services that Are Most Important to Provide.** The LOCAL services that residents thought were most important to provide based on the percentage of respondents who selected the service as one of their top three choices were:

- Police/Sheriff protection (59%)
- Construction and maintenance of roads/bridges (55%)
- Economic development and business services (29%)

**4.4 Priorities for Improvement.** If King County wants to increase overall satisfaction among residents, the County should emphasize improvements in LOCAL services where the level of satisfaction is relatively low and the perceived importance of the service is relative high. Based on Importance-Satisfaction Analysis that was conducted by ETC Institute, the highest priorities for improvement in the area of LOCAL services are: (1) construction and maintenance of roads/bridges and (2) police/sheriff protection. The priority ratings for each of the nine local services that were assessed on the survey are shown on figure 4.3 on the following page. The Importance-Satisfaction matrix at the bottom of the following page (figure 4.4) graphically shows the perceived importance of local services that were assessed on the survey against the perceived quality of service delivery. Improvements in services shown in the bottom right quadrant of the matrix will have the most impact on overall satisfaction with the County.

Importance-Satisfaction Rating						
2009 King County Community Survey						
Local County Services (Unincorporated Residents Only)						
Category of Service	Most Important %	Most Important Rank	Satisfaction %	Satisfaction Rank	Importance-Satisfaction Rating	I-S Rating Rank
<b>Very High Priority (IS &gt;.20)</b>						
Construction/maintenance of roads and bridges	55%	2	27%	7	0.4015	1
Police/Sheriff protection	67%	1	59%	2	0.2747	2
<b>High Priority (IS .10-.20)</b>						
Economic development and business services	29%	3	33%	6	0.1943	3
Community planning	21%	6	22%	8	0.1638	4
Building permits and inspections	14%	7	21%	9	0.1106	5
Local parks	26%	4	58%	3	0.1092	6
<b>Medium Priority (IS &lt;.10)</b>						
Utility Services	25%	5	64%	1	0.0900	7
Stormwater Management	12%	8	50%	4	0.0600	8
Animal care and control	12%	9	50%	5	0.0600	9

Figure 4.3 (I-S Priority Rating for Local Services)

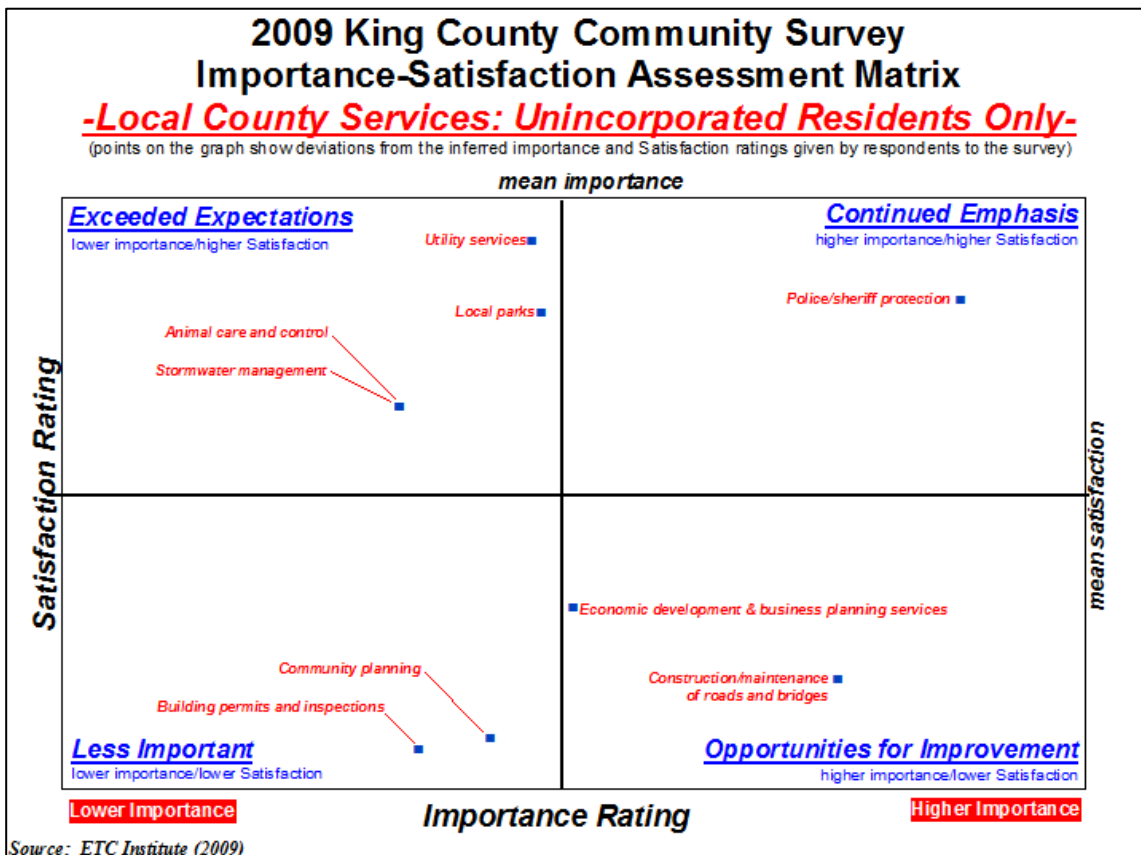


Figure 4.4 (I-S Assessment Matrix for Local Services)

**4.5 Differences by Location.** The results of the GIS mapping analysis showed that there were no significant differences between urban and rural unincorporated areas for 6 of the 9 local services that were assessed on the survey. The services that were rated significantly higher in urban incorporated areas than rural unincorporated areas included: stormwater management, animal care and control, and building permits/inspections

## **5. REGIONAL SERVICES**

**5.1 Satisfaction with REGIONAL County Services.** Residents from all areas of the County were asked to rate the quality of 10 mandatory and 16 discretionary regional services that are provided by King County. The highest and lowest rated regional services based on the percentage of respondents who gave positive ratings (ratings of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale, where 5 means “very satisfied”) and negative ratings (ratings of 1 or 2) are listed below:

**HIGHEST Rated Regional Services (highest % of positive ratings)**

- 911 and Medic One services
- Regional parks and trails
- Regional coordination of emergency medical services
- Solid waste disposal
- Elections and voter registration

**LOWEST Rated Regional Services (highest % of negative ratings)**

- Affordable housing/homeless housing programs
- Growth management
- Tax assessment, billing, collection, distribution
- Mental health and substance abuse treatment

**5.2 REGIONAL Services that Are Most Important to Provide.** Among the 26 regional services that were assessed on the survey, the services that residents thought were most important for the County to provide were:

- 911 and Medic One services
- Public health protection

The chart on the following page shows the ten most important regional services to residents.



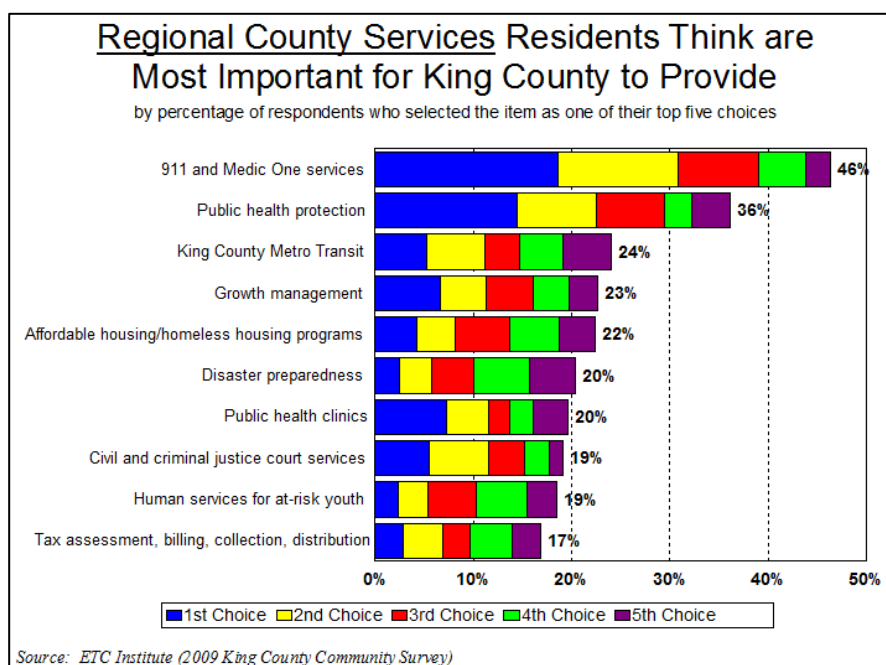


Figure 5.1 (Priorities for Regional Services)

**5.3 Opportunities for Improvement.** Unlike the results of the Importance-Satisfaction analysis for LOCAL services (which identified two clear priorities for improvement), the results of the Importance-Satisfaction analysis for REGIONAL services identified eight regional services as high priorities for improvement. These eight areas identified as “high” priorities for improvement were:

- Affordable housing/homeless housing programs
- Public health protection
- Growth management
- Human services for at-risk youth victims
- Tax assessment, billing, collection, distribution
- King County Metro Transit
- Disaster preparedness
- Public health clinics

The specific aspect of these services that require improvement cannot be determined from this survey for most services and could include inadequate levels of services, customer service, or even “excessive” services relative to public opinion. The county could seek to better understand these underlying issues by using focus groups made up of survey respondents who agreed to be contacted for additional information or research. The priority ratings for each of the 26 regional services that were assessed on the survey are shown in figure 5.2 on the following page.



Importance-Satisfaction Rating						
2009 King County Community Survey						
Regional County Services						
Category of Service	Most Important %	Most Important Rank	Satisfaction %	Satisfaction Rank	Importance-Satisfaction Rating	I-S Rating Rank
<b>High Priority (IS .10-.20)</b>						
Affordable housing/homeless housing programs	22%	5	20%	26	0.1792	1
Public health protection	36%	2	54%	7	0.1675	2
Growth management	23%	4	30%	23	0.1582	3
Human services for at-risk youth victims	19%	9	35%	17	0.1212	4
Tax assessment, billing, collection, distribution	17%	10	31%	22	0.1166	5
King County Metro Transit	24%	3	52%	11	0.1157	6
Disaster preparedness	20%	6	44%	15	0.1142	7
Public health clinics	20%	7	48%	13	0.1023	8
<b>Medium Priority (IS &lt; .10)</b>						
Civil and criminal justice court services	19%	8	52%	9	0.0921	9
Mental health and substance abuse treatment	12%	14	25%	25	0.0870	10
Employment and training services	10%	16	33%	20	0.0698	11
Flood protection	9%	19	29%	24	0.0650	12
911 and Medic One services	46%	1	87%	1	0.0626	13
Adult and juvenile jail services	9%	18	34%	19	0.0597	14
Agricultural preservation	9%	21	34%	18	0.0558	15
Elections and voter registration	14%	13	60%	5	0.0552	16
Forestry preservation	10%	17	46%	14	0.0544	17
Regional coordination of emergency medical service	15%	12	68%	3	0.0458	18
Regional parks and trails	15%	11	71%	2	0.0448	19
Property records management	8%	22	51%	12	0.0415	20
Public defense services	6%	24	36%	16	0.0387	21
Veterans' services	6%	25	33%	21	0.0382	22
Sewage treatment	9%	20	59%	6	0.0367	23
King County passenger ferry service	8%	23	54%	8	0.0358	24
Solid waste disposal (garbage disposal)	11%	15	67%	4	0.0351	25
King County International Airport (Boeing Field)	5%	26	52%	10	0.0219	26

Figure 5.2 (I-S Data for Regional Services)

The Importance-Satisfaction matrix at the top of the following page (figure 5.3) graphically shows the perceived importance of regional services that were assessed on the survey against the perceived quality of service delivery. Improvements in services shown in the bottom right quadrant of the matrix will have the most impact on overall satisfaction with the County.

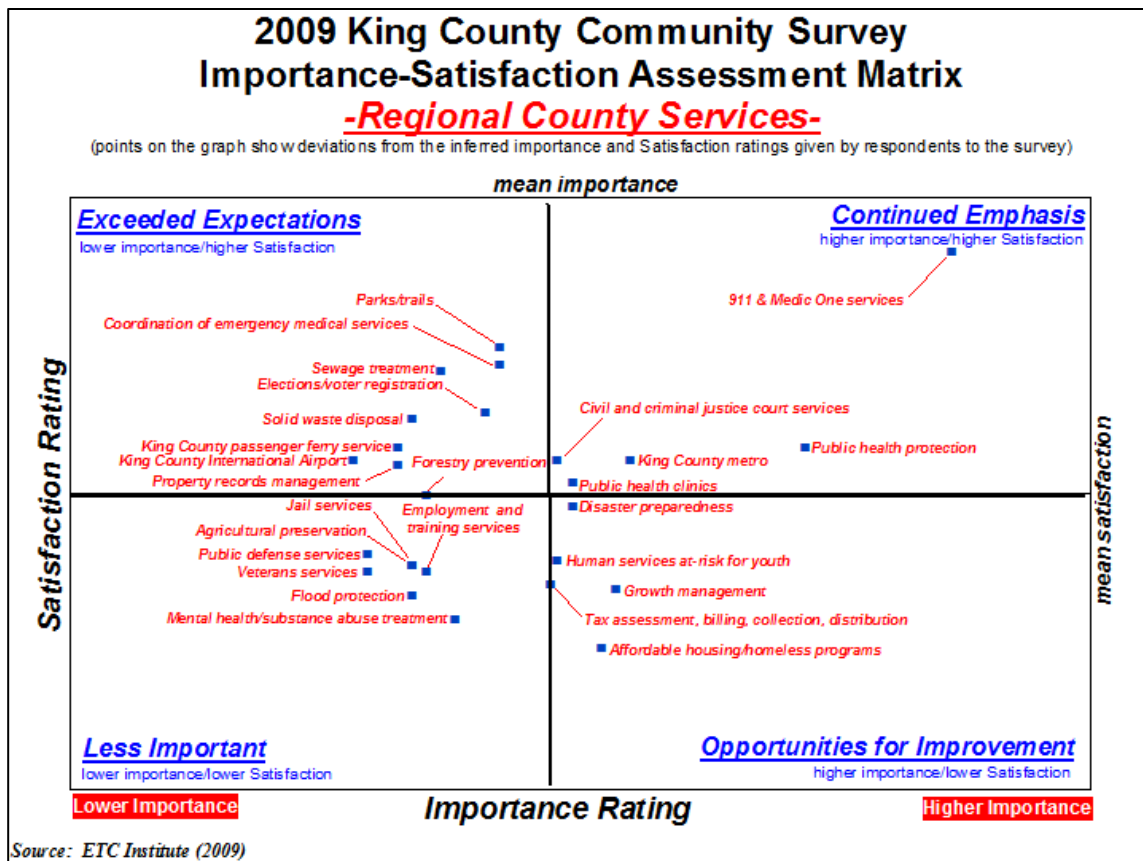


Figure 5.3 (I-S Assessment Matrix for Regional Services)

**5.4 Differences by Location.** The results of the GIS mapping analysis showed that there were no significant differences by location for 17 of the 26 regional services that were assessed on the survey. The significant differences based on location are listed below:

**Satisfaction Higher in Seattle**

- King County Metro Transit

**Satisfaction Higher in Incorporated Areas (including Seattle)**

- Elections and Voter Registration
- 911 and Medic One Services
- Growth Management
- Tax assessment, billing, collection & distribution
- Passenger Ferry Service
- Affordable housing/homeless housing programs
- Public health clinics

**Satisfaction Lower in all Incorporated Cities (excluding Seattle)**

- Property Records

## 6. FEELING OF SAFETY

**6.1 Safety Ratings.** Residents were asked to indicate how safe they felt in different situations in King County. Ninety-two (92%) of those surveyed indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood during the day and 77% indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood at night. The results of all the safety issues that were rated are shown in the chart below.

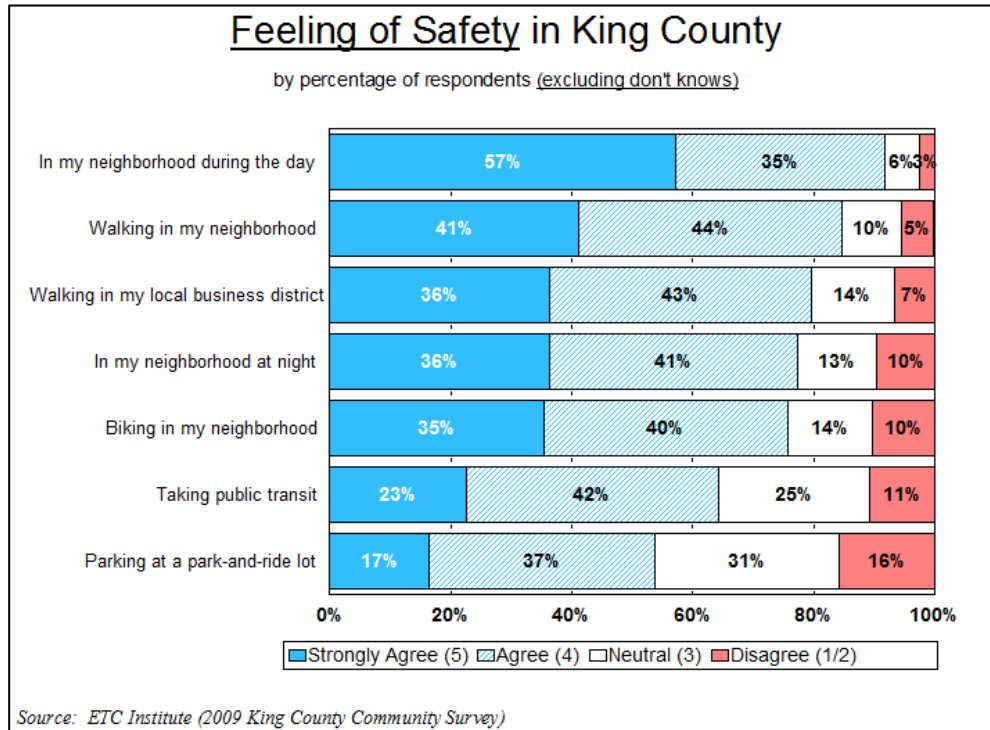


Figure 6.1 (Safety Ratings)

## 6.2 How Perceptions of Safety in King County Compare to Other Large Communities.

The figure below shows that residents of King County generally felt much safer than residents in other large U.S. communities. The percentage of residents who indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood during the day rated 11% above the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents. The percentage of residents who indicated that they felt safe in their neighborhood at night rated 16% above the national average.

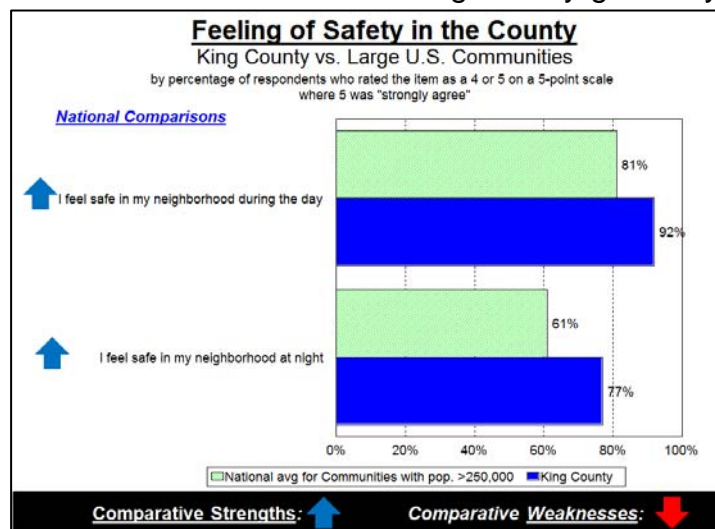


Figure 6.2 (Benchmarking Data for Safety)

## 7. LAW AND JUSTICE SERVICES

**7.1 Law and Justice Ratings.** Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with law and justice services provided by King County. Residents were most satisfied with the response time of law enforcement personnel. They were least satisfied with the timeliness of the County's court system.

The results of the survey suggest that public education about several law and justice services may be an effective method of increasing satisfaction because (1) the ratio of positive to negative ratings for several services is high AND (2) a high percentage of respondents gave "neutral" ratings. For example, 42% of those surveyed gave positive ratings for the County's efforts to proactively solve crime while only 21% gave negative ratings. This means that residents who were opinionated about the issue (and more likely to be familiar with the service) were twice as likely to give positive ratings. Since 36% of those surveyed did not have a strong opinion (indicated by their "neutral" ratings), there are significant opportunities for the County to increase satisfaction levels by educating the "neutral" public about the County's efforts in this area. Public education should result in an increase in satisfaction levels given the tendency of residents who are more familiar with the service to give positive ratings.

The results for each of the seven law and justice services that were rated on the survey are shown in the chart below.

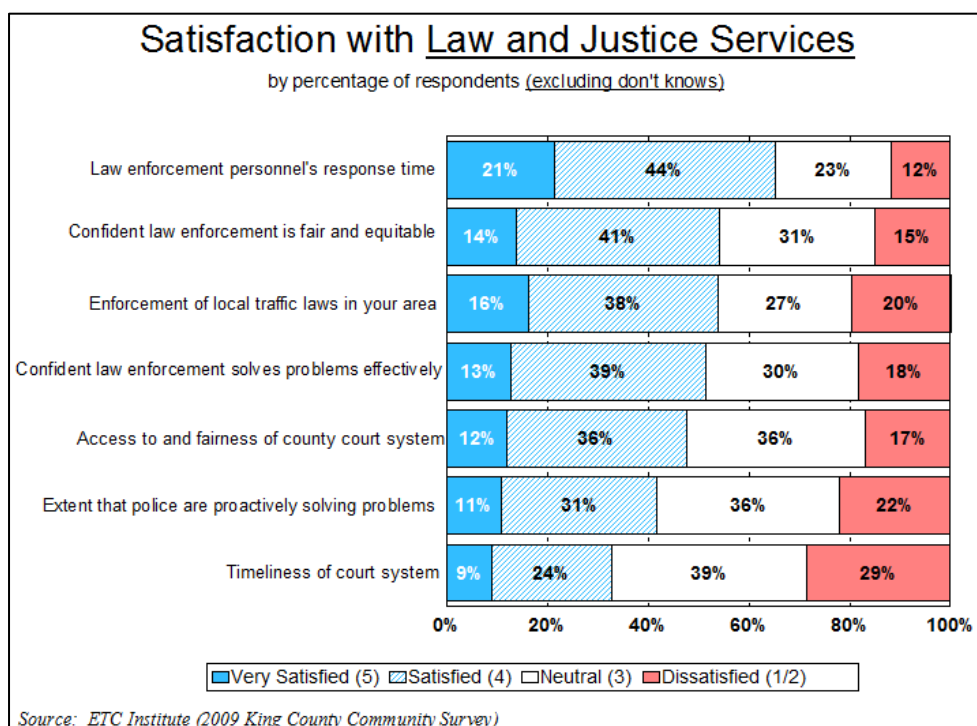


Figure 7.1 (Satisfaction with Law and Justice Services)

## 2009 King County Community Survey

**7.2 How Satisfaction with Law and Justice Services in King County Compare to Other Large Communities.** Overall satisfaction with the County's efforts to enforce local traffic laws rated 8% above the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents. Satisfaction with the response time of law enforcement to emergencies rated 3% below the national average.

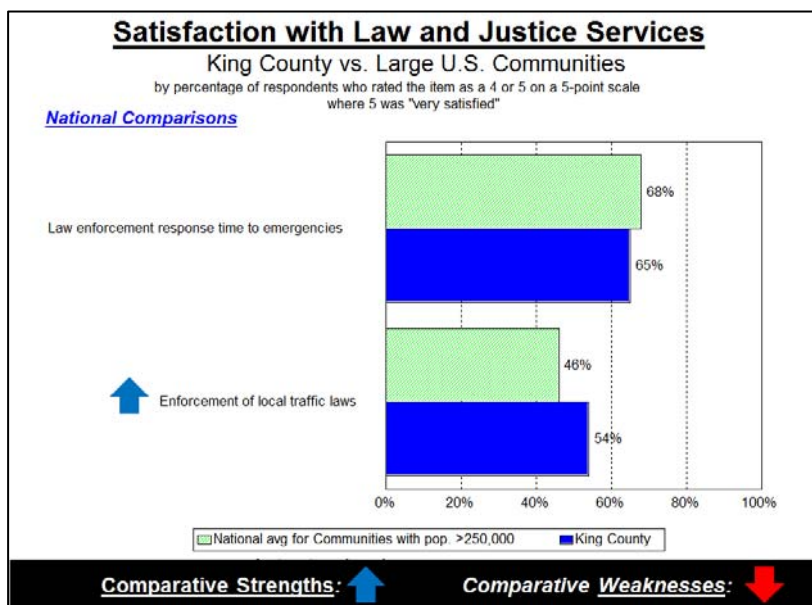


Figure 7.2 (Benchmarking Data for Law and Justice Services)

**7.3 Priorities for Improvement.** Based on the results of the importance-satisfaction analysis, the highest priority for improvement in the area of law and justice services involves county efforts to proactively solve crimes. Given the high percentage of "neutral" ratings for this service, the County should take steps to increase public education about County activities in this area.

## 8. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**8.1 Customer Service and Community Engagement Ratings.** Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with customer service and community engagement services provided by King County. Residents were most satisfied with the courtesy of employees and the County's website. Residents were least satisfied with the willingness of the County to be influenced by residents. The results for each of the seven services that were rated are shown in the chart on the following page.



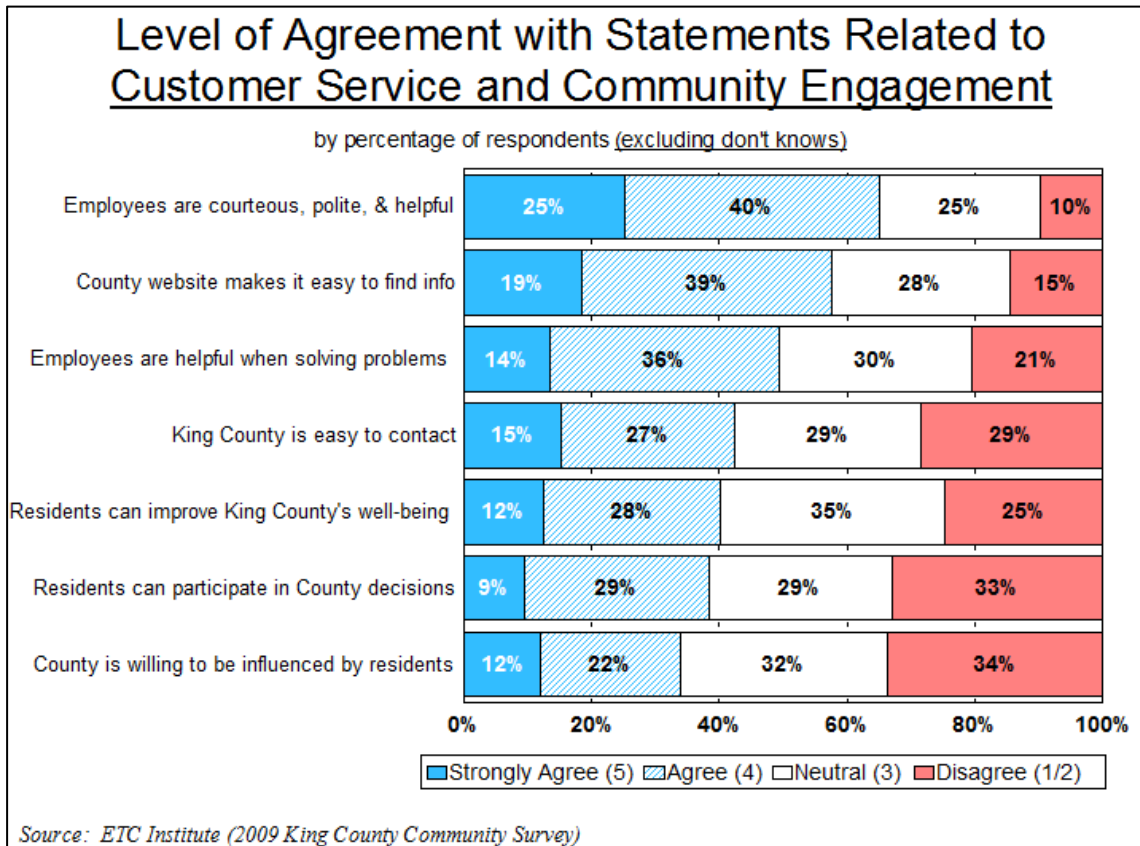


Figure 8.1 (Customer Service Ratings)

**8.2 How Satisfaction with Customer Service and Community Engagement Services Compares to Other Large Communities.** Although satisfaction with the level of participation that residents have in County decisions was one of the lowest areas rated on the survey, the results for King County were actually 1% above the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents. King County's website is setting the standard by rating 19% above the national average, but the courtesy/helpfulness of employees and the ease of contacting employees rated significantly below national average. In fact, overall satisfaction with ease of contacting County employees rated 30% below the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents.

The chart on the following page (figure 8.2) shows how the results for King County compare to the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents in four of the customer service and community engagement areas that were assessed on the survey.

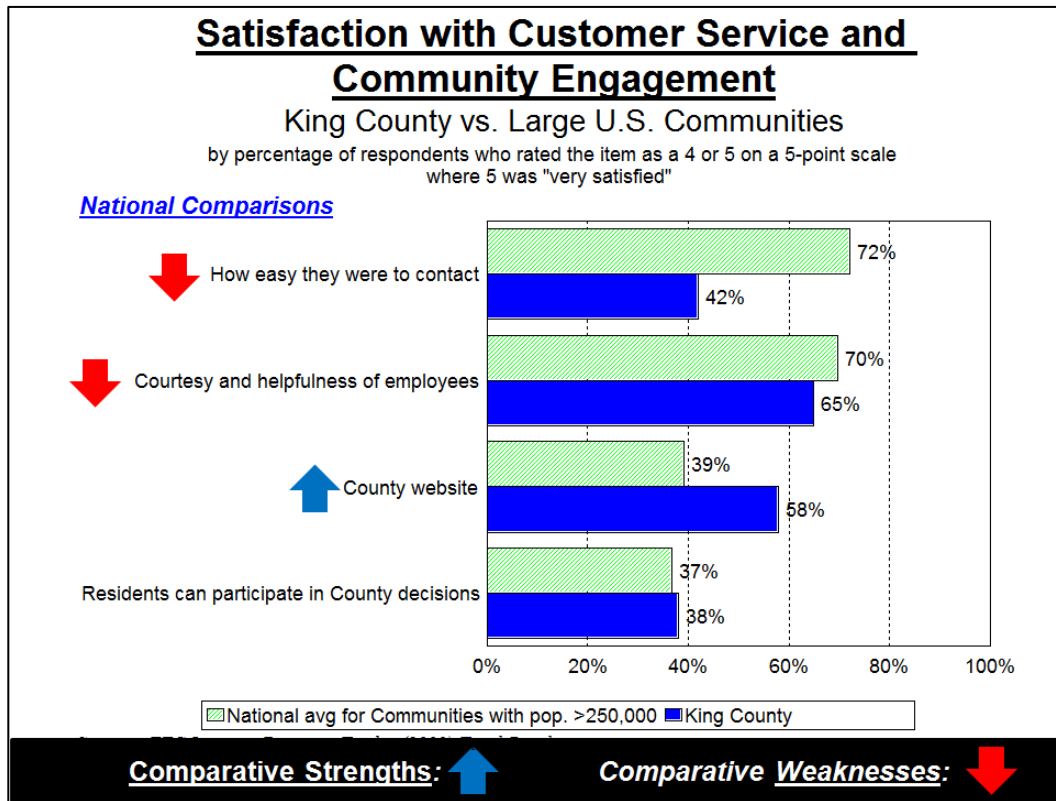


Figure 8.2 (Benchmarking Data for Customer Service)

**8.3 Priorities for Improvement.** Although residents were not asked to prioritize improvements in customer service and community engagement, the low ratings that residents gave for the ease of contacting the county suggests that this area should **definitely** be a priority for improvement. In addition to addressing the methods by which calls are routed within the county, education and branding of county services may be needed to increase public awareness of which departments to call before county services are needed.



## 9. TRANSPORTATION RELATED SERVICES

**9.1 Transportation Service Ratings.** Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with transportation services provided by King County. Residents were most satisfied with the condition of park-and-ride facilities. They were least satisfied with the condition of streets and traffic flow in the County. The results for each of the 13 transportation services that were rated are shown in the chart below.

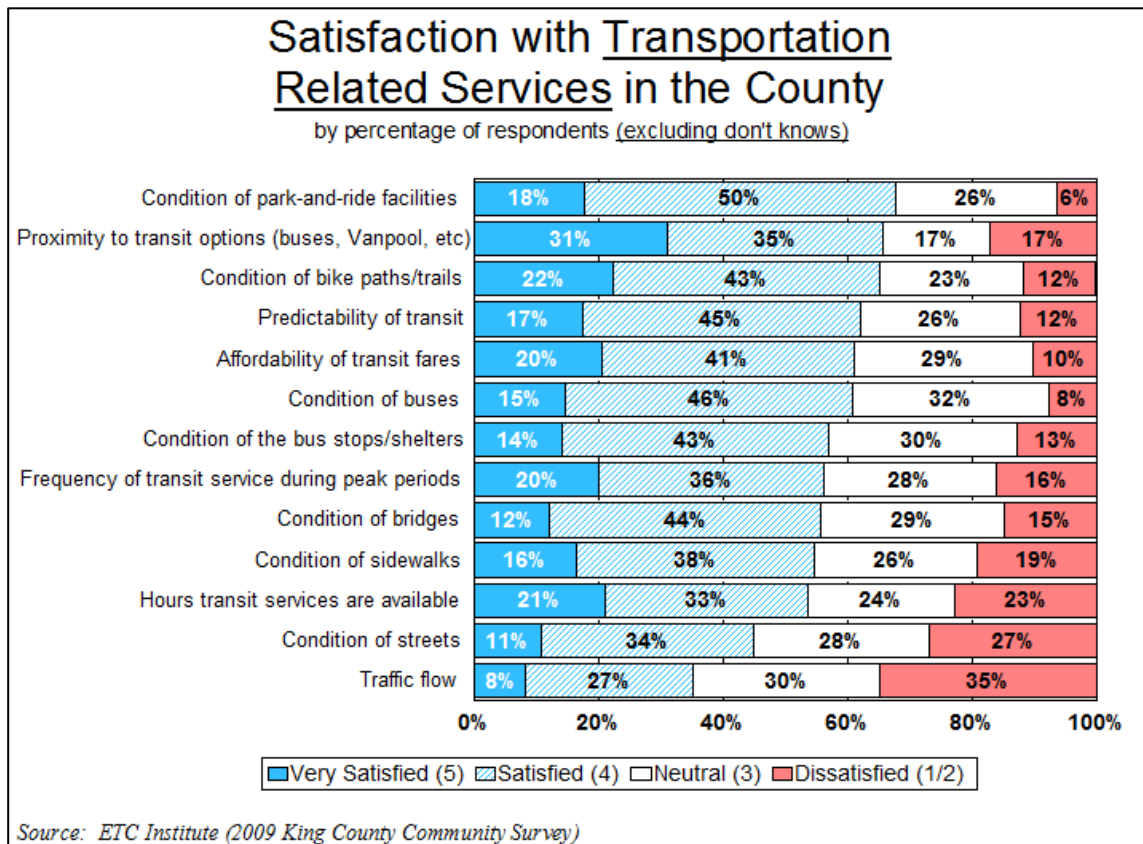


Figure 9.1 (Satisfaction with Transportation Services)

**9.2 How Satisfaction with Transportation Services in King County Compares to Other Large Communities.** Satisfaction with the condition of county streets rated 1% below the national average for communities with more than 250,000 residents. The condition of sidewalks rated 4% above the national average and traffic flow rated 4% above the national average. The chart at the top of the following page shows the results of all transportation services that were compared to other large communities.

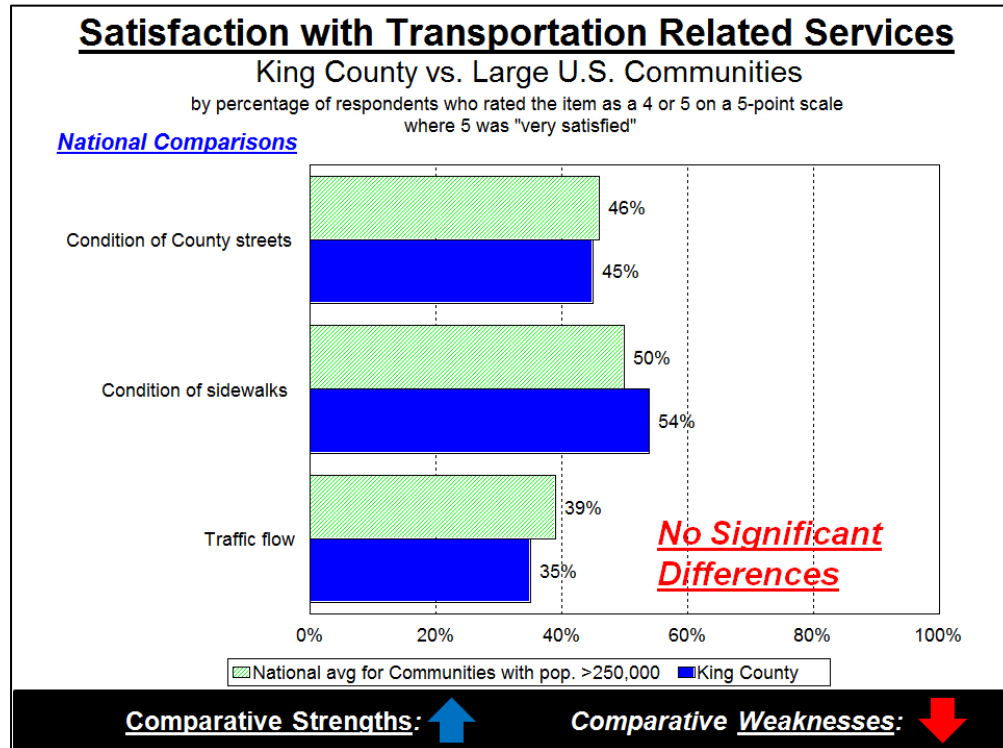


Figure 9.2 (Benchmarking Data for Transportation Services)

**9.3 Priorities for Improvement.** Based on the results of the importance-satisfaction analysis, the three highest priorities for improvement in the area of transportation were:

- Traffic flow
- Condition of streets
- Hours transit services are available

The condition of the bus stops/shelters and the condition of park-and-ride facilities were the least important transportation issues to residents.

## 10. USAGE OF COUNTY SERVICES

County services and facilities that residents indicated they had used most during the past year based upon the percentage of residents who indicated they had used the service at least once during the past 12 months, were: County parks (89%), King County Metro transit services (67%), and passenger ferry services.

## 11. GUIDING VALUES FOR THE COUNTY

The values that residents thought should be most important when setting priorities for the delivery of county services were: (1) keeping people safe and (2) promoting transportation. The chart below shows how residents ranked eight different values that were assessed on the survey in descending order based on the percentage of residents who selected the value as one of their top three choices.

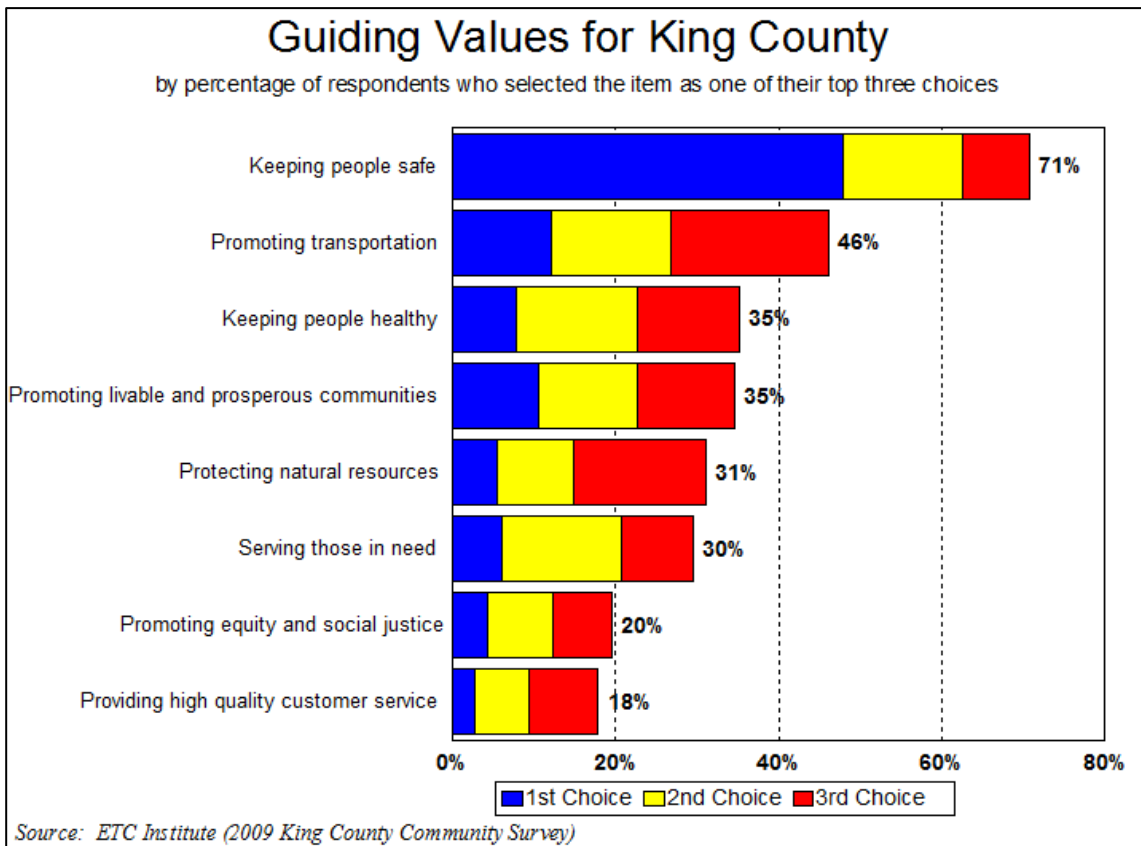


Figure 11.1 (Guiding Values)

## 12. REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The regional priorities that residents felt were most important for the County to emphasize over the next five years are shown in the chart below. These ratings were based on the percentage of residents who selected the issue as one of their top three choices. The top three regional priorities were:

- partnering to improve the education system
- improving public safety
- maintaining an effective public transportation system

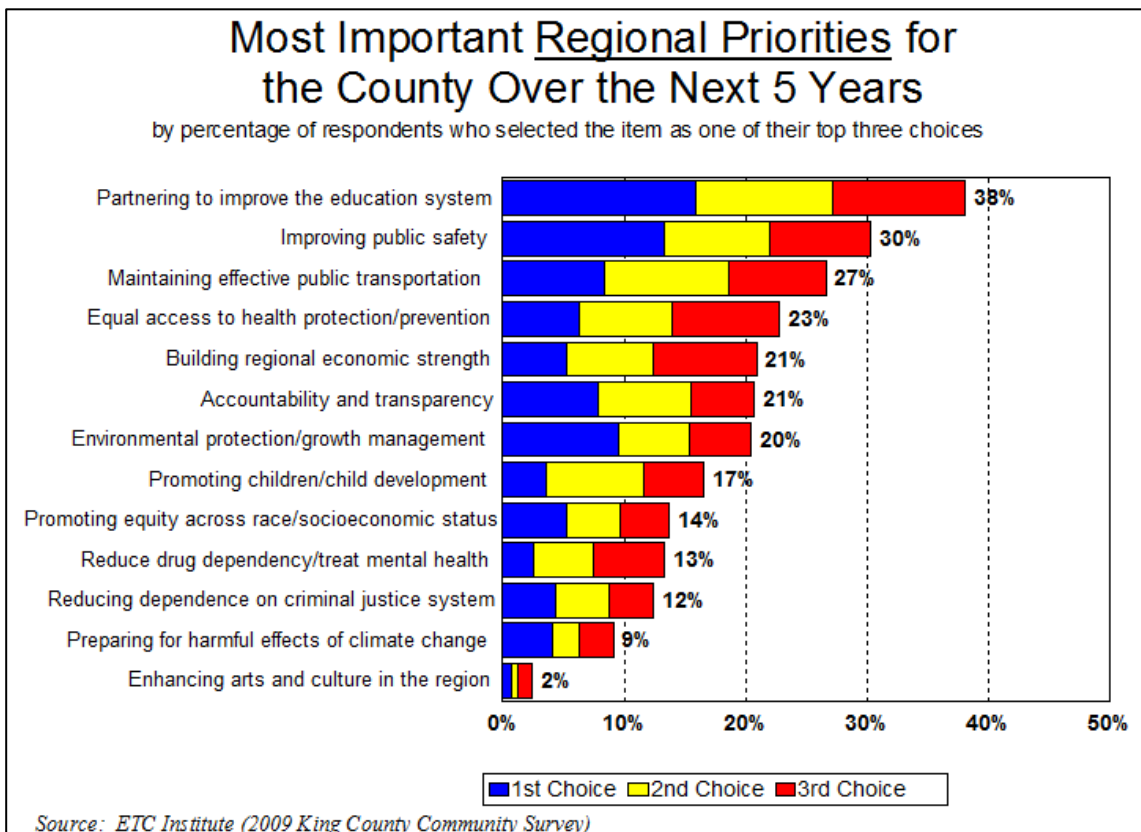


Figure 12.1 (Regional Priorities)

Although King County is not directly or completely responsible for providing all of these services, county leaders can use this information to identify ways to collaborate with other organizations in the region to meet the needs of residents.

## 13. Summary

Overall, the quality of life and quality of county services rated slightly above the national average for large communities with more than 250,000 residents. Strengths and weaknesses of King County compared to other large communities are listed below:

- Comparative Strengths:
  - Perceptions of the County as a place to raise children
  - Perceptions of the County as a place to work
  - How safe residents felt in their neighborhood during the day
  - How safe residents felt in their neighborhood at night
  - Enforcement of local traffic laws
  - The County's website
- Comparative Weaknesses:
  - Perceptions of the County as a place to retire
  - How well the County is planning for growth
  - Police/sheriff services
  - Building permits/inspections
  - How easy it is to contact employees
  - The courtesy and helpfulness of county employees

**Priorities for Improvement.** Based on the importance-satisfaction analysis that was conducted, the top priorities for improvement to local and regional county services are listed below:

### LOCAL Services

- Construction and maintenance of roads and bridge
- Police/Sheriff protection
- Economic development/business services

### REGIONAL Services

- Affordable housing and homeless housing programs
- Growth management
- Public health protection
- Human services for at-risk youth
- Tax assessment, billing collection and distribution
- Disaster preparedness
- Metro Transit
- Public health clinics

**Baseline for Future Performance.** While the results of the 2009 survey will have many applications, one of the most important applications should be to provide a baseline for assessing the County's performance in future years.